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Bouton - Rev. Aaron Foster - 1870.

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"The Good-will of my Saviour."

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A

DISCOURSE,

PREACHED IN THE

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, IN EAST CHARLEMONT, MASS., JUNE 23, 1870,

In Memory of

REV. AARON FOSTER,

LATE PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN THAT PLACE.

BY REV. NATHANIEL BOUTON, D. D.

CONCORD, N. H.

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*Lawrence S. Mayo*

TO  
THE FAMILY, PARISHIONERS,  
AND NUMEROUS FRIENDS OF THE  
REV. AARON FOSTER,  
DECEASED,  
THIS OFFERING OF FRIENDSHIP  
IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,  
BY THE AUTHOR.

## DISCOURSE.

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WE are assembled this hour, my friends, on an occasion as tender as it is rare. Drawn by a common sympathy, and sentiments of profound respect and sorrow, we come to present a memorial offering to one justly esteemed, honored and beloved by us all. It is fit that we lay our memorial offering upon this altar, hallowed by *his* spirit and presence, the more sacred to many by association with his rare endowments and gifts, his teachings and prayers.

In presuming to give expression to thoughts appropriate to such an occasion, I beg liberty to say that I am not permitted to use the language of eulogy; but only agreeably to the desire of my friend, to make a statement of facts which may serve to illustrate his character and life.

MATTHEW XXV: 21.

“WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT: ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD.”

This scripture suggests topics suited to the present occasion. First, our *accountability* for the use of the talents committed to us by the great Master, the Lord Christ: for all the gifts which we possess, natural or acquired; for our means and opportunities of usefulness; for our time, property and influence,—for every thing

that involves duty in the relations we sustain, we shall severally be called to give an account. "Every one of us must give an account of himself unto God."

The text also suggests the great desirableness of the *approval* or good-will of the Master. "Well done; thou good and faithful servant." We all understand, by experience or observation, the satisfaction which accompanies a service done for another that meets his approval. When conscious that this is the case, then toil becomes a pleasure; a burden, light; a word, a look, a smile of approval stimulates to a higher desire to please and to win. Indeed a desire of the approbation and esteem of others is one of the original instincts of human nature; and, when rightly directed, sanctified by divine grace, it becomes one of the most powerful incentives to Christian fidelity. Of such approval of the Master a faithful disciple may have a conscious experience,—according to those beautiful words of Christ: "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him." In this manifestation of Christ to a disciple, producing a conscious sense of his approval, consists much of the life and joy of true religion.

The text suggests another thought: The nature of the *Christian's reward*, "Enter thou into the *joy* of thy Lord." The future life and reward of the faithful is not merely a state of joy, but of joy provided for and bestowed on them by their Saviour-Judge,—"*joy*" of which he is the source and the object—the fountain and the centre, as has been beautifully said: "Here, the joy of our Lord enters into his saints, in the earnest of the Spirit; there, they shall enter into it; have a fullness of his joy and dwell in it, as an element, to all eternity,"

"Forever with the Lord."

But on these topics I must not now enlarge: we shall

find illustrations of them all in the views, the character and life of that servant of Christ whose memory we cherish to-day.

REV. AARON FOSTER.

In a correspondence with the Rev. Aaron Foster, he once said, "THE GOOD WILL OF MY SAVIOUR IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN EVERY THING ELSE. I REPEAT THIS MANY TIMES A DAY, AND MAKE IT THE MOST REAL AND TRUE PART OF MY LIFE." Precious testimony of a good man, worthy of being transcribed and engraven on every Christian's heart! "*The good-will of my Saviour!*" What can transcend this in importance; what so inspiring in motive—so consolatory in seasons of trial and sorrow; what so needful in the day of final account!

This sentiment, I may here say, was the true key-note of his life; the index pointing out the course which he was sure to pursue, and explaining what otherwise might seem anomalous—"THE GOOD WILL OF HIS SAVIOUR."

PARENTAGE.

The Rev. AARON FOSTER was born at Hillsborough, N. H., March 19, 1794. He was the son of Aaron and Mehitable (Nichols) Foster, the eldest of ten children—eight sons and two daughters. His parents were both natives of Reading, Mass., but removing early to Hillsborough, settled, after marriage, on a farm about midway between the Bridge and the Centre of the town. Of the father, I may say in passing, he was an intelligent, industrious, frugal farmer, who attained the venerable age of eighty-three years, and died at the residence of one of his sons in Muscatine, Iowa, November 30, 1852.<sup>1</sup>

1. It may be mentioned as a rare and beautiful testimonial of filial regard for their father, that the spot where his remains are interred on the far off western bank of the Mississippi river, is marked by a granite monument quarried and wrought in the city of Concord, N. H., and forwarded by order, and at the joint expense of his children, by way of New Orleans, and thence up the Mississippi river, to Muscatine. Probably it is the only granite shaft west of the "Father of Waters." The enclosure where it stands is ornamented with evergreens, of a species native to the soil of New Hampshire.

Mr. Foster's mother was a sensible, discreet, Christian woman, who died in Hillsborough, May 15, 1816, at the age of forty-four years; but not till she had embraced her first-born son as one "new-born" into the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> His maternal grandmother was a sister of Rev. Aaron Bancroft, D. D., of Worcester, Mass., and hence he was related, as cousin, to the distinguished American historian, Hon. George Bancroft.

In his boyhood and early youth, Mr. Foster lived at home and worked on the farm with his father. He was of a serious and thoughtful turn. Even then he used occasionally to go to a retired spot and ask God to give him "wisdom." Attending an academy at Salisbury, N. H., about four months, he became qualified at the age of seventeen, to teach a district school. In his twentieth year, as I have heard him relate, he set out from home on foot,—like many a noble New Hampshire boy, to seek his fortune—somewhere. Providence was his guide. His steps were directed to Schoharie, in the State of New York, about thirty-two miles west from Albany, where, in the spring of 1815, he engaged a school. There it was that the Lord revealed his grace to him; there he met the first recognized and acknowledged tokens of his Saviour's good-will. Mr. Foster's account of the gracious change he then experienced, is simple, in these words:

#### HIS CONVERSION.

"The half of 1815 I was teaching at Schoharie Court-house, N. Y. A missionary, sent by some local society in Connecticut, had preceded me by two or three years, and had gathered a church in the place of twelve members, most of them New England people. On the Sabbaths they worshiped in my school-house and read sermons. In boarding among the people, I came one evening to one

1. It is remembered, that when the mother first met her son, after his conversion, she embraced him, with great affection, as a child of God.

of these families, and was surprised into a new thing—a *prayer-meeting*. In this family I found the life of Harriet Newell. By comparing her dates and exercises of mind with my own on the same day and hours, as I vividly recalled them, I saw the broad difference between us, and saw “the plague of my own heart.” I became a worshiper and a believer, and in the school-house was baptized into the sacred name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. More than fifty years have passed, and no other part of my history remains so real and so full of emotion.” This event in his history gave shape and coloring to his after life.

#### PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Returning home with the earnings of his school, he went to Kimball Union Academy, in Plainfield, N. H., there to commence preparatory studies for the ministry. He entered Dartmouth College, in 1818; defrayed his expenses by teaching in vacations, with some aid also from his father, in Hillsborough, and graduated in 1822. In scholarship, the testimony of a classmate is—“He was not brilliant, but solid.” In a class of forty-five, he ranked among the first third.<sup>1</sup> From college, in the fall of the same year, he entered the Theological Seminary, at Andover, Mass., and graduated in 1825.

#### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS.

Here my acquaintance with Mr. Foster began. Though he was my senior in age, I was his, by one year, at the seminary; and I trust I may be indulged in some reminiscences of him, as I then knew and loved him. Even now his image is before me: I seem to see just how he looked, when I first made his acquaintance, near forty-eight years ago. I used then to meet him, often walk-

1. Among his classmates who still survive, are Revs. William Clark, Amos Foster, Wakefield Gale, Jacob Little, Isaac Rogers, Henry Wood, Isaac Willey, Hon. Ira Perley, and Francis Cogswell, Esq.

ing alone, along the avenues of the seminary, under the shade of the beautiful trees that adorn the grounds, or in walks and groves where students were wont to resort for exercise or meditation. His gait was slow and measured; his stature and size medium; his form a little inclined; his aspect sedate, meditative; his eyes often seemingly half-closed, yet when fully opened, beaming with intelligence and good-will; his manners simple, unaffected, pleasant; his greeting cordial. Hence, coming into closer contact and intimacy with him, he wonderfully grew on the estimation and love of his friends. Except sometimes physically depressed, he was cheerful and buoyant in spirits, full of pleasant sayings, rich in recital of facts and anecdotes, and from the store-house of memory bringing forth things new and old.

In constitution and natural temperament Mr. Foster was a marked man. Unlike every other, he was only and always like himself. He had an *individuality* amounting almost to idiosyncrasy, that singled him out, so that once seeing and knowing, you would not be likely to mistake or forget him. This singular identity he retained all through life. As I knew him in 1822-25, a student at Andover, so I saw and conversed with him at the centennial celebration at Dartmouth College, in 1869. He was the same man—only, as I may say, *a little more so*,—more advanced in years, a few more grey hairs, a little more stooping, a few more and deeper wrinkles on his placid face, a little slower in step and speech; but the same benignant countenance, the same hearty welcome and shake of the hand, the same good-will, and the same proof that he was true-hearted, and a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ our Lord.

In Mr. Foster the perceptive and reflective faculties were largely developed. He *saw* things and *thought* them over and over. Hence, as his friends must have observed, there was sometimes apparent a cast of coun-

tenance that indicated abstraction, mental absorption—a sort of peering of the eyes—half-closed, as if looking not into the dark future, but into himself,—a look of introspection—taking an interior view of things, and then a gleam of satisfaction playing on his face. When you saw that expression you might be sure that his “heart was inditing some good matter,” and that he would startle you by some remark or conclusion which his reflective mind had reached. Herein, as I conceive, lay the secret of Mr. Foster’s originality. He was original, but still natural; because he simply gave scope to the faculties with which God had endowed him.

I have it from a classmate,<sup>1</sup> and for some time a roommate of Mr. Foster, that his was a mind of great compass and power. It was original and versatile. Remark-  
ing to me, he says, one day, how he would like to be original,—I said, “You need make no special efforts in that direction; you have only to act yourself and pour out the treasures of your own mind, and you will be perfectly *original* and *honest*.” During the second year of his theological course his mind was overworked, and he suspended his studies for a season, resorting to Saratoga springs for health.

#### RELATION TO HOME MISSIONS.

In his last year at the seminary he was one of a band of students who were earnestly inquiring of the Lord what he would have them to do? In what field labor—whether as missionaries or settled pastors? and particularly what should be done to supply the communities that were springing up all over our western country? Often did this band of brethren meet for conference and prayer; eagerly did they watch “the signs of the times.” It may be remembered that at this period (1825), while there were local missionary societies in several States, which sent out

1. Rev. Isaac Rogers, now of Farmington, Me.

preachers to different parts of our country, there was no general Society, whose object was to locate and support pastors in the new settlements. With others, Mr. Foster's ruminating mind was turned to this subject. He remembered the scenes of Schoharie school-house, and how much he then needed a pastor's guidance.

In February of this year Mr. Foster wrote and delivered a rhetorical address, in the chapel, on the importance of providing for permanent pastors in new settlements, and advocated the organization of a national society for that purpose. The theme was new, the address able, earnest and eloquent. It was highly approved and commended by Dr. Porter, and, in the good providence of God, it formed one link in the chain of events that led to the organization of the American Home Missionary Society, in the city of New York, on the 12th day of May, 1826. It has already passed into accredited history and it is fit to-day to repeat it, "that the first *public* utterance on the subject of a National Home Missionary Society, that had distinct relation to the organization that followed, was by Mr. Aaron Foster, then of the Theological Seminary, Andover, Mass."<sup>1</sup> That society is now the glory of our land.

#### HIS DISTINCTIVE PIETY.

With a mind well furnished with theological knowledge, Mr. Foster was now ready to enter upon the work of the ministry. He was ordained as an evangelist, at Rutland, Vt., October 19, 1825. Before following him into his fields of ministerial labor, let us take note of his *spiritual* qualifications. His piety was of a distinctive type, partaking of his characteristic qualities of mind and heart; not different in nature from that of other good men, but modified by his temperament and composed of ele-

1. See history of the origin and organization of the American Home Missionary Society, published in the *Home Missionary*, November, 1860, and also in pamphlet form.

ments in different proportions from others; and hence, again, like himself, peculiar in its development. As a Christian his whole experience and life might be resolved into what has already been said—seeking and enjoying the good-will of his Saviour. That seemed to be the ruling motive—the very passion of his soul. It might be called his *beau ideal* of piety. More than most Christians he could say, “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” If I may so express it, he cultivated a familiarity with his blessed Lord, seeking in all things to please him and to enjoy in return his Saviour’s love. Hence it was that to him Christ was a living presence. His faith embraced the whole doctrine of Christ, in his person, character and offices, so that he appropriated all of Christ to himself, insomuch that he seemed to walk with him and talk with him, as friend with friend, face to face. He had indeed a deep insight into “the plague of his own heart,” and was deeply humble and penitent; but he never lost sight of the grace that was in Christ to pardon and save. It is even said that he never doubted of his acceptance through the merits of Christ. This living for and in the good-will of his Saviour was an every day experience; so that, less than most Christians, was he subject to fluctuations of faith, zeal and love. A sense of union and communion with Christ diffused a sweet savor over his life, and made him happy every day. In reply to an inquiry into the secret of true happiness, he once said, in substance, “I will tell you: It occurred to me one day that the world is always looking forward to to-morrow as the time when they shall do every thing that is good and have every thing that is pleasant, and that I was doing it with the rest; but unfortunately to-morrow never came. Then I said to myself, ‘If the Lord wants me to rejoice in his love and to enjoy his beautiful world, and to delight in my family to-morrow, he wants me to do it to-day; and if I ought to repent of all wrong and to serve him and have his good-

will and the good-will of my fellow men to-morrow, I ought to do it to-day.' I concluded I would try the experiment and see how it worked; and I have tried it ever since—and I like it—I like it." Such, in the elements and substance of it, was his religion—living for Christ, in the practice of Christian duty, and enjoying the good-will of his Saviour every day. Hence, to use his own language, at a later period, "So far as I may please God each hour of the day, that is enough for me."

#### HIS MINISTRY.

We come now to his work in the ministry. Upon the advice and recommendation of Rev. Dr. Porter, immediately after ordination, he went to South Carolina into Laurens District, and there performed service three years (1825–28) as a missionary, under the patronage of the Charleston Missionary Society. The next four years (1828–32) he was pastor of a Presbyterian church in Pendleton, S. C., the residence of the Hon. John C. Calhoun. He had the support and confidence of that distinguished statesman; and, as I have heard him relate, had frequent interviews with him at his house. On one occasion, after a long evening visit, when he arose to go, at twelve o'clock, midnight, Mr. Calhoun requested him to close their interview with prayer, which he did.

Here I should mention, that soon after installation, he revisited New Hampshire, traveling all the way alone, in a private carriage; and on the 13th day of May, 1829, married Miss Dorothy A., daughter of Dr. Roswell Leavitt, of Cornish, N. H. She accompanied him South, and to the day of his death, shared all his fortunes, sorrows and joys, and still survives. Our sympathies are with her to-day.

In Pendleton his labors were crowned with God's blessing in the conversion of souls. "Masters and servants were added to the church. At one time, sixteen servants

and as many whites." Here, however, he had trials: while he greatly endeared himself to the people in general, he met with opposition from political men, who feared and hated his influence. It will be recollected that this was the period of nullification. The subject of slavery was beginning to be agitated. Heretofore acknowledged as a moral evil, an attempt was now made to give slavery a divine sanction, and to base it on scriptural authority. Mr. Foster was true to his convictions; but, foreseeing the gathering storm, he deemed it prudent to retire from the field. But in doing this he had a very tender experience of the affection and good-will of his parishioners. He loved them, and they loved him. Having preached his farewell sermon on the Sabbath, he took a position in the broad aisle of the church, and as the people pressed around him, with many tears, he gave each a parting hand and an affectionate farewell,—they sorrowing most of all that they should see his face no more.

On this exodus from the South, came to him and his wife the first and, perhaps, the chief domestic sorrow of their life. Within a week, while stopping with a friend, their first-born child, a little son, was violently seized with the croup, and died before morning. Leaving the remains of the dear one behind, doubly sorrowful they went on their way.

Returning to New England, Mr. Foster acted as an agent, a little more than a year, for the Massachusetts Missionary Society, in connection with the Secretary, Rev. Dr. Storrs, of Braintree, Mass., collecting funds, and on the Sabbath supplying a little church in Millville, in the town of Mendon.

His next field of service was at Fort Covington, a town in northern New York, in the valley of the St. Lawrence river. Commencing his ministry there in October, 1833, a work of grace soon began which continued through the ensuing year; indeed, for three and a half years following,

he used to say, "I never had a day when I did not know where to find a young convert and a burdened sinner." Every communion season during that time there were additions to the church—sometimes a large number. His health, however, becoming impaired, he was advised by physicians to suspend, in a degree, pastoral labors, and to engage in farming. This he did, at a place called East Constable, in the same vicinity, preaching, however, on the Sabbath. There he continued for six years (1837-43.)

In 1844 Mr. Foster took an agency for the American Peace Society, in which he was associated with his esteemed friend and brother-in-law, Rev. George C. Beckwith, D. D., recently deceased. But still his heart was in the pastoral work, and he accepted an invitation to supply the Robinson Church, in Plymouth, Mass., (1845-50). Here, among the descendants of the Pilgrims, in sight of the Rock on which they landed, and of the Burial Hill, where the dust of many of them sleeps, his faith in the providence of God and his attachment to the institutions which the fathers planted, were greatly strengthened. On the one hundred and twenty-seventh anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims (1847), he preached an able memorial discourse which was published.

#### PASTOR IN EAST CHARLEMONT.

But the Master, whom he served, had in reserve for him another field of labor, to which he was called. He was installed pastor of the Congregational church in East Charlemont, Mass., in February, 1850. Of his relations to this people, and the fruits of his ministry, I hardly feel qualified, nor dare trust myself, to speak. I may say, however, that the church which had then been organized only about five years, was feeble in numbers and in pecuniary strength. His salary was only four hundred dollars, and his average congregation on the Sabbath about eighty. But here, in

the strength of his manhood, with the advantage of a rich experience in the ministry in other places, he devoted himself to the improvement and spiritual welfare of the new charge committed to him. Here, for a period of twenty years, he labored happily and successfully. Here was his home. In houses along the banks of the river, and on the hill-sides, in every family and school-house, his name was a household word; by every man, woman and child, he was known, honored and loved. His great heart of kindness, his sympathies, his kind, obliging ways, his pleasant, witty, wise sayings, his varied teachings from scripture, providence, history,—from every source that gave him facts and illustrations; his rich, familiar, varied, spiritual prayers, his abounding praises and thanksgivings,—in a word, the assurance that the pastor's *heart* was with them, endeared him to them, as they to him. More fitly than of any priest of the poet's imagination, it could be said of him, as

“Solemnly along the street he came, \* \* \*  
 the children  
 Paused in their play to kiss the hand he  
 extended to bless them;  
 Reverend he walked among them, and  
 uprose matrons and maidens  
 Hailing his slow approach with words of  
 welcome.”

Of the results of Mr. Foster's ministry of twenty years, I am authorized to say, that eighty-eight united with the church during his pastorate—sixty-eight by profession, and twenty by letter; that his preaching was as acceptable the last two years as at any time; that, indeed, he seemed to have had a fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost, so that his heart was more fully given up to the work. The last year but one (1868) was a year of spiritual harvest. The spirit of God was poured out in unusual measure, giving an accession to the church of twenty-three members.

It may here be noted, that after Mr. Foster's installa-

tion, he went as a delegate (1851) to the World's Peace Convention, in London, in company with his friend Dr. Beckwith, and was absent about four months. In 1853 he was chosen by the town of Charlemont, as a delegate to the Convention in Boston, for revising the Constitution of the State.

Let me here group together a variety of miscellanies touching our reverend brother. He had a numerous and rare acquaintance. He numbered among his friends and correspondents many of the eminent men of our own country and some in Europe—statesmen, civilians, ministers and philanthropists. While in Europe he inspected the curiosities and memorable things and places in England; the splendid and magnificent scenery of Paris; traveled over Scotland, through Edinburgh and Glasgow, and into the highlands, by Loch Katrine, the scene of the "Lady of the Lake," and by Loch Lomond, on the land of "Rob Roy." In these journeyings he had a rare faculty of making friends; so that gentlemen of high distinction would do him honor. On one occasion, being about to take the cars from York to Edinburgh, he saw two gentlemen standing together, and walking up to them, said, "I am an American traveler; I am going to Edinburgh alone, through a country of which I know little; I should be truly thankful to sit with some gentleman who will have patience in answering the questions which I may ask." After the silence of a moment, one of them replied with true politeness, "We will take a seat with you, sir,—in any one of these carriages you please." These gentlemen paid him every attention at Edinburgh, and afterwards at Glasgow. He wished to visit Oxford university and go through its antiquated halls. He called, an entire stranger, on Mr. Warne, the postmaster of Oxford, of whom he had heard as being friendly to Americans, and introduced himself, simply stating his wish to see the university. "In half an

hour," said he, "I was in a carriage with Mr. Warne on our way; for several days was his guest." He was introduced to Dr. John Lee, whom he calls one of the English aristocracy, and invited by him to spend several days at his country seat, forty miles from London. There he was entertained with distinguished politeness.

While at the Peace Congress he saw an old gentleman of intellectual aspect sitting alone. Approaching him, he entered into conversation on American slavery. Soon, a friend passing along, introduced him to Rev. Dr. Thomas Dick. "My heart," he says, "bounded at the name. I was instantly upon my feet, and in behalf of my wife and daughters, and of the American people, I thanked Dr. Dick for his books—so many and so good." He visited the seats of the descendants or heirs of John Hampden and Oliver Cromwell, and afterwards corresponded with them. When at the Cromwell mansion he was shown the sword which the famous Puritan Protector wore, and he said, "Peace man as I was, I drew the sword from its sheath, and could not but wave it over my head!" When his eyes first lighted on the Crystal Palace, his whole emotional nature was lifted up. "I was alone, and indulged in the wild frenzy of imagination; and there was a luxury of thoughts and feelings gushing up, which few occasions in this world move so mightily; nor were they chiefly of this world. I thought of my early dreams of heaven and its magnificent palaces; I thought of the value of God's love to me, more precious than the lands and palaces, and royalty of England."

Only in a single instance were his wishes ungratified. He went to the Palace of St. James, desiring to be admitted to see the Queen's gardens. But, he says, "I found *the latch-string was drawn in.*" The palace was guarded by a soldier. Respectfully advancing, he said,

"I would like to go in and see the Queen's gardens, and *the Queen herself*. I have made a long voyage over the water, just to see her." The guard said. "There is no permission to enter." I replied, "If the Queen will come over to my house, the door shall be open, and she shall be welcomed as all friends and strangers are," The guard smiled and shook his head.

After his return from England he wrote out from notes and memory an account of his visit, which was published in the *Greenfield Republic*, in forty-nine letters, addressed to the young people of Franklin County, Mass.<sup>1</sup>

To keep up intercourse with his numerous acquaintances and friends, besides a wide correspondence, his custom was, once a year, in the month of June, to harness his ponies, take his wife or a daughter, and ride away on long ranges or in circuits, of one, two or three hundred miles, giving notice in advance, that on such a day he would be at a particular place. Ever prompt, he rarely failed to fulfill the appointment. In this way, spending a day in one place, or a week in another, he would sweep a wide circuit and come home refreshed in body and in spirits.

Pardon a personal reminiscence. In these annual journeyings Mr. Foster was accustomed to preach where he spent a Sabbath. About ten years since he visited Concord, N. H., and preached in the afternoon of a Sabbath in the pulpit of the speaker. His text was in James, ii : 13. "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." The impression of the sermon, and also of one of the hymns which he read, is still fresh in the memory of many of the people.

"I'm but a stranger here—  
Heaven is my home."

1. These letters, in my judgment, are far more instructive, entertaining and useful, than most of those written by more recent excursionists, and are worthy even of republication in a more durable form.

Particularly impressive was the last stanza, which he read with deep emotion :

“There, at my Saviour’s side—  
 Heaven is my home;  
 I shall be glorified—  
 Heaven is my home;  
 There, are the good and blest,  
 Those I loved most and best—  
 Heaven is my home!”

Mr. Foster was a noble-souled lover of his country. His heart beat high with impulses of patriotism, loyalty, freedom and justice. Hence, when the terrible conflict came on, though a peace man in every true and just sense, there was no hesitation as to his duty. He spoke for liberty; he prayed for his country and for success to her arms. At every defeat or reverse of our army, his heart was heavy; in every success, joyful. But, like many others in this conflict, he had an experience of one crushing sorrow. News came to him of an evening, that his honored and beloved son-in-law, Captain Chaplain Fiske, of the Fourteenth Connecticut Volunteers (better known to the reading community as Dunn Brown,) after the terrible battle of Chancellorsville, was missing; that his horse came in riderless, but the captain was not to be found. The tidings for the moment stunned him. The letter fell from his hand. “I cannot understand it! I cannot understand it! I have prayed, as I thought, in faith, for the safety of my son; I cannot understand it!” The greater part of that night he spent in his study, sleepless and alone, in prayer to God. Suffice it to say, that the burden was in a day or two lifted from his heart, and his faith renewed by the intelligence that his son was still living, though a prisoner, and would soon be paroled.

#### HIS HOME.

Will it be deemed an unpardonable intrusion, if I speak of his HOME—the sweet abode of comfort, peace, joy, and

hospitality. His dwelling-house, a model of his own kind, fitted for the convenience of his family and the many guests that loved to visit, as he to entertain them; the garden grounds adjoining, wherein were all manner of plants and flowers, and fruits growing in a wild luxuriance; his study, in a retired nook, out of the way of noise, wherein he meditated, prayed, and with rapid pen sketched the sermons which he had mentally wrought out in walks or rides, or which had welled up in his heart in some hour of devotion. His home, with the good-will of all around him, and the good-will of his Saviour, was his paradise, in which he communed with God. In family devotions there was a marked peculiarity. He made his own comments on scripture lessons read; his prayers, entirely original in conception and expression, were humble, grateful *converses* with his God and Saviour. He was sure to remember and commend to the divine favor, not only his own household, but every guest at his table, and every friend from whom he received a letter; thus, literally, "in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, he made known his requests unto God."

But I must conclude. Having enjoyed so much in life of the good-will of his Saviour, it might be expected he would have the comfort and assurance of it in death; that having improved so well the talents committed to him, the Master would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And it was so.

#### CLOSE OF LIFE.

After reaching the age of seventy, Mr. Foster, aware that his remaning time must be short, seemed to become more and more spiritual and conversant with his Saviour. His correspondence with particular friends indicated a most humble, devout frame of mind. "Our days on earth are growing less, but the future may be growing brighter;

the good-will of God more sought after and more prized ; living more by faith and more enjoying help from the Saviour, peace and rest of heart."

In 1866 he says, "I am now seventy-two, and write and deliver my sermons with all the satisfaction and success I once did ; but I am becoming less active and resist the cold less than I have done. I am calculating that each year will leave me a year more infirm and nearer the end. This end is always in view, and so are the scenes beyond. I think there are not many where life is more tranquil, or where sources of happiness are more than mine. I have many friends ; I also very much enjoy my profession and my home. So it is, that a large part of my devotional meditations are praise and thanksgiving. If life lasts two or three years more, my ministry will close ; for it seems to me that God allows his servant a little time to rest from labors, and give himself to prayer and meditation before he goes home."

At a later date he says, in a letter to a sister, "Our family are near the limit that God allows to human life. Our next meeting must be at the judgment-seat of Christ. Let us stand fast in the faith, and I know the affairs of this world will be overcome, and will easily be left behind ; and we shall follow with joy the Lord Jesus, and live nearer, and a little nearer,—heart, and faith and life, will be with Christ and he with us."

Mr. Foster's health and strength began visibly to fail last October ; but he continued to preach once on the Sabbath until his twentieth anniversary, February 13th. He designed on that day, to make a farewell address to the people, and wholly resign his charge. But his strength failed him. Hoping to rally, he set out on a journey, intending, perhaps, to reach friends at the south. But he could proceed only as far as Geneva, N. Y., the residence of his son-in-law, Rev. Henry S. Kelsey, there to linger a few weeks and to die ! Happy, happy servant

of God! He may have wished, and you may have desired, that the closing scenes of his life might be here at his happy home and amidst the people of his charge! But, as ordered, all was well! His wife was with him, and children by turns were all gathered about him,<sup>1</sup> with their ministries of love—witnesses of his peace and of his triumphs in Christ. His expressions at sundry times were: "My soul is as full as it can be of the great salvation." "I shall die in the faith." "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." He dictated brief messages to be sent to particular friends, and to each of his brothers and sisters. To a friend he said, "I am nearing the dark river, but the dear Saviour gives me light and joy in the way." To a sister—"Let us part in the name of the Lord Jesus. I trust his grace will receive us both into those better mansions. Farewell." In the morning frequently he would say, "What a night I have had. The Spirit has been taking the things of Christ and showing them to me." Again—"How I have loved the Saviour; how my soul has delighted in him! What a wonder and glory it will be to save such a sinner as I!" Still later—"Almost home." "Jesus, come quickly!" "Now he comes!" So he entered into the joy of his Lord—desiring only that on his tombstone might be written—

"I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE."

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The Rev. Mr. Foster died at Geneva, N. Y., on Sunday, April 10, 1870, at 2 o'clock, P. M. On the Tuesday following, funeral services were performed at the house of Mr. Kelsey. His remains were then removed to Mount Auburn, Mass., and placed in a receiving tomb, until May 24th, when the final interment was made in a family lot, purchased there several years ago. Peace to his sleeping dust!

1. Mr. Foster leaves four daughters, of whom three are married.

The following lines<sup>1</sup> descriptive of the introduction of a redeemed soul to his Saviour in heaven, we humbly trust may be applied to the experience of our departed friend, in "entering into the joy of his Lord."

\* \* \* \* \*

I drew near to Him  
 And He to me. O beatific sight!  
 O vision with which nothing can compare!  
 For a brief space methought I looked on Him.  
 And He on me. O blessed look, how brief  
 I know not,—but eternity itself  
 Will never from my soul erase the lines  
 Of that serene transfiguring aspect—  
 For a brief space I stood, by Him upheld  
 Gazing—and then in adoration fell  
 And clasp'd his sacred feet—

\* \* \* \* \*

But bending over me  
 He raised me tenderly. \* \* \*  
 And then he drew me closer to Himself,  
 And told me I was His and He was mine,  
 And how my Father loved me, and He loved.

1. Bickersteth's Christian Poem—"Yesterday, To-day and Forever."









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